WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 1957

"... as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee..."

What is the nature of the unity we seek? It is the unity which God wills, we reply. But how do we know His will? We know in part, but we pray for the coming of that which is perfect. The perfect unity of Christians is the unity of the Father and the Son. If Jesus Christ Himself was moved to pray for the manifestation of this unity in the Church, how much more ought we to pray!

Each year during the period January 18-25 more and more Christians of many separate churches and confessions are praying for unity. They pray in special ecumenical worship services, in churches, college chapels, and small prayer groups. Where this period proves inconvenient, they choose the season of Pentecost, or another time. And many continue this practice of prayer for unity in their daily worship throughout the year.

You are invited to participate in this most essential liturgical practice, and to encourage others to join you.

The prayers and litany in this leaflet are intended for both corporate and private devotion. They may be reproduced in any form or translation, except that direct quotations should not be distorted.

Dr. Olive Wyon has prepared this service. Her two excellent booklets on "Praying for Unity" may be ordered from Edinburgh House Press, 2 Eaton Gate, London, S.W.1.

Commission on Faith and Order
WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

UNITY IN CHRIST

PREPARATION

"He who gave us life told us how to pray... First of all, the Teacher of unity and peace... did not wish each one to pray only for himself. We have a public and common prayer. When we pray, it is not for one person but for the whole people, because we all are one. God taught us peace, concord and unity: He bore us all in one Person; and he desires each one to pray for all." St. Cyprian, on the Lord's Prayer.

Jesus says: "I am the Way you must travel,
I am the Truth to which you must come,
I am the Life in which you must remain.

I am the Way without error,
I am the Truth without falsehood,
I am the Life without death."

St. Bernard.

Therefore: Let us enter on this Way,
Let us hold this Truth,
Let us lead this Life.

St. Ambrose.

WORSHIP AND THANKSGIVING

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself." (John 12: 32.)

Let us praise God:

For our "given unity" in Christ Himself:

For His Cross and Passion: for His Blood poured out for all...
For His Risen Life imparted to all...

For the grace and love and blessing which He pours out through the life and ministry of the Church, which is His Body...

For our fellowship in prayer :

Drawing us nearer to our Lord and to one another...
Over-leaping all barriers of race and language, tradition, ignorance, and misunderstanding...

For our Lord's Ministry of Prayer :

Bearing us all in His Heart before God...
Breathing into us the prayers which He wills to answer...
Enabling us to persevere in prayer against all temptations to grow slack, or even to despair...

For the ministry of the Holy Spirit,

the Source and Creator of unity...

PENITENCE

In the light of these great gifts of God's grace, let us pray for His forgiveness for all our sins which cause disunity — in personal relations, in the Church, and in the world...

We confess with sorrow :

our want of love to God and man...
our self-complacency, and our reluctance to admit any fault or imperfection in our Church or in ourselves...
our want of faith in God's power to create unity...

Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

O Saviour of the world, who by Thy Cross and precious Blood hast redeemed us : Save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord. *Amen.*

INTERCESSION

For the leaders of the Church throughout the world :

That they may be given wisdom and guidance from God and strength to lead us all forward on the way of unity...

That they may have the courage to break away from ancient prejudices, outworn traditions, and all mistaken conservatism...

That all who are in very difficult conditions may be upheld and encouraged by the prayers, sympathy and understanding of their brethren throughout the world...

For all Christian people everywhere :

That we may be deeply convinced that *God wills unity*...

That we may be filled with a growing desire that His will may be done in this matter of Christian unity, and done, as far as possible, through us...

That we may be alert to follow God's guidance, and willing to take fresh steps towards Christian unity, without waiting to see whither they will lead, knowing that "obedience precedes understanding"...

That in each communion we may humbly seek that holiness without which no man can see the Lord...

That as we come closer to Christ we may come closer to one another, as members of one family...

That we may follow Him who is the Way,
cleave to Him who is the Truth,
and live by His life, now and always. *Amen.*

A LITANY FOR UNITY[1]

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

(I Cor. 10: 16-17.)

As this bread was once scattered upon the mountains, and has now been gathered into one, so may Thy Church be gathered into the unity of Thy Kingdom: All glory be unto Thee O Lord, for ever and ever!

R. *Gather Thy Church, O Lord, from the four winds, into the kingdom of Thy Love.*

Holy Father, we thank Thee for Thy Holy Name, which Thou hast imprinted upon our hearts, and for the knowledge of faith and immortality which Thou hast brought to light through Jesus, Thy Servant.

R. *Gather Thy Church, O Lord, from the four winds, into the kingdom of Thy Love.*

Have mercy, O Lord, upon Thy Church,
Deliver her from all evil,
And perfect her in Thy Love.
Gather her out of the nations
Into that unity which Thou hast prepared,
And unto Thee be the Power and the Glory,
For ever and ever!

R. *Gather Thy Church, O Lord, from the four winds, into the kingdom of Thy Love.*

Come, Lord Jesus, come!
Glory be to Thee for ever and ever. *Amen.*

R. *Gather Thy Church, O Lord, from the four winds, into the kingdom of Thy Love.*

The Lord's Prayer.

PRAYER[2]

Lord God, Thou hast built in heaven and earth
a single Church
of Truth and Love and Holy Spirit;
one family and communion, whose temple is the Lamb,
one body indivisible, here and beyond,
the Body of Thy dear Son.

Thou art its foundation and cornerstone, Thou its Head and Life,
O JESUS EMMANUEL;

Thou whom we have seen and touched and know,
Eternal Truth, Eternal Love, holy and Eternal Spirit.

Father, all souls are Thine: gather them into one;
bring us into the one Truth;
bind us by the one Love;
perfect us with the one Spirit...
Within Thy single Church built of Thy grace,
Grant us Thy peace.

The God of Peace be with us all. *Amen.*

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[1] Based on the *Didache*.

[2] *My God, my Glory*. E. MILNER-WHITE, p. 57. S.P.C.K. (by permission).